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ABSTRACT

Most Americans today have more spare time than ever before, but few have learned how to use it wisely. In an effort to remedy this deficiency and to insure the future competence of the average person to utilize his leisure time with maximum fruitfulness, some recreational theorists have advocated the establishment of a formal program of training and preparation for the optimal use of leisure. Agreeing with the view of recreation as an important medium for the expression, fulfillment, and enrichment of the personality through the gratification of diverse psychological needs, the position taken in this paper is that, while at present no one profession can justifiably claim to be equipped to assume the necessary role of counselor to the individual in matters pertaining to the optimal use of his leisure, the discipline which could perform this function is counseling psychology. This paper concerns itself with an attempt to formulate the characteristics and functions of this proposed new area of psychological specialization called recreational psychology, and to develop an outline of a program for training its practitioners. (Author/PC)

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Avocational Counseling: A prospectus for a new psychological specialty

Myron Brender

Our age, known variously as the Machine Age, the Age of Automation, the Atomic Age, and the Space Age, may yet find its place in history as the Age of Leisure. The marked increase in leisure characteristic of our era has been recognized widely and commented upon at length by students and observers of our culture (Neumeyer and Neumeyer, 1958; Douglass, Hutchinson, and Sutherland, 1957; Slavson, 1948).

Viewed historically, extended leisure is seen as arising in a social order that is capable of producing surplus wealth, private or public, of sufficient magnitude to afford the adequate maintenance of at least a chosen few in a life of comparative freedom from toil. Among the ancient Egyptians it was the priestly group that formed just such a privileged elite; the early Greeks conferred similar enviable status upon their citizen class; and the medieval church and feudal aristocracy found itself in a comparably fortunate position. But it was not until the advent of the scientific-technological revolution of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that the equivocal benefits of

CG 009 687

appreciable leisure were filtered down into the plebian ranks of the general population.

Contributory in large measure to this recent historical development has been the radical decline in the length of the standard work week from an average of 70 hours in 1870 to an average of 40 hours in 1950 with prospects favorable for a further reduction to an average of 30-35 hours in the foreseeable future (Soule, 1957). Consistent with this trend is the program organized labor has set for itself to win even greater leisure for its membership by working toward a three-day work week with longer and more frequent paid vacation periods (A.F.L. C.I.O., 1956).

Of equal significance has been the dramatic 44 per cent rise in real net product per capita occurring over the relatively brief span of less than 80 years (Soule, 1957) and reflecting clearly the enhanced productivity enjoyed by the nation as a direct result of the improved efficiency of modern machinery. Manpower is rapidly being replaced by mechanical power, and in the process men are being freed from tedious hours of debilitating labor for the constructive pursuit of leisure. With the advent of total industrial automation, it is anticipated that millions more will be added to the ranks of those at leisure.

Finally, the changing age distribution of the population at large has played a vital role in the spread of leisure. "From 1900 to 1950 the total number of persons 65 years old and over increased from slightly over 3,000,000 to 12,250,000 which is more than a fourfold

increase. It is estimated that by 1975 the total will exceed the 20,000,000 mark" (Neumeyer and Neumeyer, 1958, p. 47). With the age for retirement from regular occupational activity customarily set at 65, this forecast obviously portends a substantial increase shortly in the at-leisure population.

Paralleling these critical socio-economic changes have been certain related modifications in attitudes toward leisure. In the past, in keeping with the austere puritanical heritage of the nation, leisure and recreation were regarded with disapproval, even outright censure. More recently, however, probably because of the greater general availability of free time, and perhaps through the intensive efforts of recreational leaders and educators, there has evolved a fairly wide acceptance of and sanction for time spent at leisure. No longer need the individual suffer under a burden of guilt simply because of a greater amount of leisure time has become available to him.

But the appearance of this new leisure has not been an unmixed blessing; for leisure can be abused and misused as readily as it can be used constructively (Meyer, 1957). Observers have noted that many people do not know what to do with this new leisure. Thus, there are those who while stimulated and fulfilled by their daily work experience bewilderment, boredom and frustration when thrown upon their own resources during extended periods of leisure. Mannheim (1944, p. 317) remarks that "the average citizen is unable to invent new uses for his leisure," and the Neumeyers (1958, p. 22) affirm that "Preparation for leisure is now regarded as a vital necessity. Most people have more

spare time, but few have learned how to use it wisely. The average person has not been educated to use his free time to the best of his own advantage."

In an effort to remedy this deficiency and to insure the future competence of the average person to tuilize his leisure time with maximum fruitfulness, some recreational theorists have advocated the establishment of a formal program of training and preparation for the optimal use of leisure. Charlesworth (1957, Pp. 142-143) asserts that if they are to fulfill their function adequately and to discharge their professional responsibilities to the public properly recreationists "must disseminate the doctrine that the enjoyment of leisure is an end in itself, and that recreation skills should be compulsorily taught all through the period of school attendance." In a similar vein but with less specific suggestions regarding actual implementation, Neumeyer and Neumeyer (1958, Pp. 199-219) note that:

> It has been assumed that leisure pursuits do not require special training; that, since recreation and play activities are free-time, spontaneous pursuits, no special training is necessary for them. That this view is fallacious is evidenced by the misuses of leisure...Education for leisure is increasingly being considered as of vital importance... Education for leisure is not a fad, but is essential to a well-balanced program of education. If students are educated vocationally, and not avocationally, the job is but half done. To be able to make a living but not to enjoy the fruits of labor means that one's preparation for life is not complete.

Since leisure-time and avocational activities are, by and large, primarily recreational, it naturally has been assumed that the task of educating and guiding the public in the optimal use of leisure rightfully belongs to the professional recreationist. Thus, in formulating his program for a new philosophy of recreation, Charlesworth (1957) adresses his exhortations to the professional recreationists as the logi-

cal agents for its promulgation and implementation. Slavson, while in the main retaining this focus on the recreationist as the pivotal person in avocational planning, opens the way for consideration of the possibility of assigning the educative and guidance function to some other profession when he acknowledges, "Recreationists are most concerned with this matter, but it would be a mistake to assume that it is limited to them alone. All persons who are in any way working with people --- and for people --- must turn their attention to the question of beneficial leisure-time occupations" (Slavson, 1948, p. 1).

Agreeing with Slavson's view of recreation as an important medium for the expression, fulfillment, and enrichment of the personality through the gratification of diverse psychological needs, the position taken in this paper is that while at present no one profession can justifiably claim to be equipped adequately to assume the unique and necessary role of counselor to the individual in matters pertaining to the optimal use of his leisure, the discipline which most appropriately could perform this function, and which most easily can prepare itself to do so is psychology. Moreover, within psychology the specialty most readily adaptable to this purpose is counseling psychology. By combining the skills of the clinician and the behavioral scientist with the specialized knowledge of the recreationist and by focusing his professional attention upon those problems centering about the fruitful pursuit of leisure, the counseling psychologist could help to transform the presently amorphous field of avocational activity into a systematic and structured discipline, one firmly founded on a base of psychological theory, research and practice.

The remainder of this paper will concern itself with an attempt to formulate the characteristics and functions of this proposed new area of psychological specialization and to develop an outline of a program for training its practitioners.

THE FUNCTIONS OF THE AVOCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGIST

Assessment. Frank Parsons' classical statement to the effect that the process of vocational guidance consists of two interrelated aspects, man analysis and job analysis (Paterson, 1938), can be applied with equal appropriateness to the task of the recreational psychologist. In order to assist the individual to obtain maximum gratification and benefit from his leisure-time pursuits, a necessary first step would be to arrive at an accurate and detailed assessment of his personality in terms of needs, interests and aptitudes and to relate this knowledge to the area of avocational activity. To do this would require that valid and reliable techniques and procedures designed specifically with this end in view be available. To date no such specially designed instruments exist. An ingenious attempt to put the Strong Vocational Interest Blank to this use was made by Super (1940) in his pioneer study of avocational interest patterns. Unfortunately, the promising, albeit modest, beginning has never been followed up adequately. Consequently, the need for a set of suitable and workable techniques constructed specifically for avocational assessment remains. This need might be met eventually by borrowing and adapting techniques employed in other psychological specialties or by the invention of new devices.

Turning to the opposite side of the traditional guidance coin, that side which concerns itself with job analysis (in this case recreation analysis), one again finds that much important spade work remains to be done. Corresponding to the job analyses and the occupational descriptions currently widely available to counseling psychologists for their diagnostic use and for the use of their clients, recreational descriptions and analyses will have to be provided for the use of the recreational counselor in his diagnostic and prescriptive work. Thus, systems of classification of recreational activities patterned perhaps along lines resembling the invaluable Dictonary of Occupational Titles (United States Department of Labor, 1949) will have to be constructed. Detailed descriptions of recreational activities similar in format to the standard occupational monographs also will have to be prepared; and, most importantly, thoughtful analyses of recreations in terms of the needs they may be potentially capable of gratifying will have to be compiled.

Knowledge of the intrinsic need and value gratifications potentially available in various avocational and recreational activities will then permit the recreational counselor to guide his clients into those activities which hold for them the greatest promise of personal growth and fulfillment.

Counseling. The principal counseling function of the recreational psychologist will be the interpretation of the client's personal assessment data to him coupled with specific prescriptions and recommendations regarding suitable recreational activities. The client may also be provided with descriptive material pertaining to the recreations and avocations most appropriate to his needs and abilities, and with a list of community

resources equipped to cater to his requirements. Misunderstandings and resistances can be handled as they arise. In some instances, particularly with older people who may retain some of the traditional puritanical attitudes regarding the sanctity of work and the essential wickedness of leisure, the counselor may find himself obliged to allay feelings of guilt and to induce in the client an attitude of acceptance of leisure and its attendant pleasures.

Research. The research responsibilities of the recreational psychologist spring from his professional needs. To him will fall the task of devising or adapting and standardizing the techniques for use specifically in accomplishing an accurate avocational diagnosis. Faced with the goal of successfully matching the unfilfilled needs of the client with the need gratifications inherent in a given recreational activity, the counselor must inevitably be concerned with the development of procedures for appraising both the man and the recreation, and for bringing the two together.

Beyond this, it is likely that the recreational psychologist may eventually find himself involved in the invention of games and hobbies intended to satisfy avocational needs perhaps not yet recognized or not yet gratified by any of the recreational activities presently available.

RECRUITMENT, TRAINING, AND PLACEMENT

Recruitment. Candidates for graduate training in recreational psychology probably will be selected initially from the ranks of the general student body in psychology with particular preference to be given to those who manifest a special interest in counseling psychology.

This raises the issue of whether recreational psychology is to be regarded as a separate and autonomous area of psychological specialization or merely a subspecialty within an area of specialization. Clearly there will exist a close relationship between recreational and vocational counseling. This being the case, it can be argued that both recreational and vocational guidance should be grouped together under the more general rubric of counseling psychology. Practically this is probably the way the field will establish itself initially. Thus, until recreational psychology develops for itself a distinct and substantial body of knowledge and techniques, gains general acceptance for itself, and creates a appreciable demand for its services, the recreational psychologist most likely will be trained in the university departments of counseling psychology primarily as a counseling psychologist with an additional minor concentration in counseling for avocational adjustment. Once the field proves itself to be viable and self-sustaining, however, it is anticipated that independent programs in recreational psychology will emerge.

While conceivably preparation in recreational psychology can be given at two levels--either the master's or the doctor's--in keeping with the traditional trend in psychology it would seem advisable to gear it to the doctorate. With this end in view, a detailed description of an ideal Ph.D. or Ed.D. curriculum in recreational psychology follows.

Training. Until the boundaries of the discipline are defined more clearly, and the duties of the recreational psychologist are formalized and delimited, a degree of flexibility will have to be allowed in the undergraduate preparation of the recreational psychologist. Probably

the best kind of undergraduate background will prove to be one which consists primarily of a broad liberal arts exposure with a major concentration in general psychology and a minor in sociology, particularly in the sociology of leisure and recreation. An alternative, or additional, minor might well be in recreation with an emphasis on the theory of play and the psychological factors involved. Candidates with a major in recreation and an adequate minor in psychology and in the related social sciences might prove to be equally acceptable, provided that this type of undergraduate training is obtained within the context of the liberal arts curriculum.

Bearing in mind that the recreational psychologist is to be primarily a psychologist and secondarily a psychological specialist in an applied field, the first year or two of graduate training should consist of basic courses in advanced general psychology, experimental design and research procedures, statistical techniques, psychological theory, and in principles of physiological, comparative, developmental, and social psychology. Perhaps the emphasis and the amount of time spend on each of these areas might be less intensive than that required of those who are to devote themselves exclusively to a career of pure research; but exposure to all aspects of psychology would seem to be avoided. Only in the advanced stages of graduate training should specialization be introduced.

This specialized training might consist of courses in objective and projective assessment techniques, abnormal psychology, seminars and practicums in recreational, vocational, and personal adjustment counseling, perhaps psychotherapy, plus courses in the recreational needs of special groups such as the handicapped, the retarded, the delinquent and the criminal, the history and theory of recreation, the psychological principles

of recreation, the community resources for recreation, and the sociology of recreation and leisure. While this list of proposed specialized graduate courses is not to be regarded either as definitive or exhaustive, it is intended to be suggestive of the kind of material that might be included in the advanced stages of the training of the recreational psychologist.

As in any applied specialty, provision should be made for a rotating internship in a variety of cooperating agencies.

Because of the newness of the discipline, dissertation topics should abound. Assessment procedures, counseling techniques, recreational classificatory systems, recreational literature, psychological analyses of recreations, inventions of new recreations, theoretical formulations of the psychological significance of play, recreation and leisure, field studies or laboratory experiments, all should provide fertile ground for doctoral research.

Placement. Although the demand for the services of the recreational psychologist, at least initially, and perhaps for some time thereafter, probably will not be as great as that for the services of the counseling psychologist, in principle, wherever the services of the counseling psychologist or the recreationist are required there also should a need be found to exist for the services of the recreational psychologist. Hospitals, both medical and neuropsychiatric, mental hygiene clinics, penal institutions, rehabilitation workshops, institutions for the boarding and training of the retarded, the blind and the deaf, vocational guidance centers, child guidance clinics, social service agencies, educational institutions, youth organizations, military establishments, religious and fraternal orders, industry, homes and recreational centers

for the aged, and manufacturers of toys, games and playground equipment can be expected to call upon the special skills of the recreational psychologist. As the contributions of the recreational psychologist become more widely recognized and appreciated by the public and by his professional colleagues, placement should constitute no problem.

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